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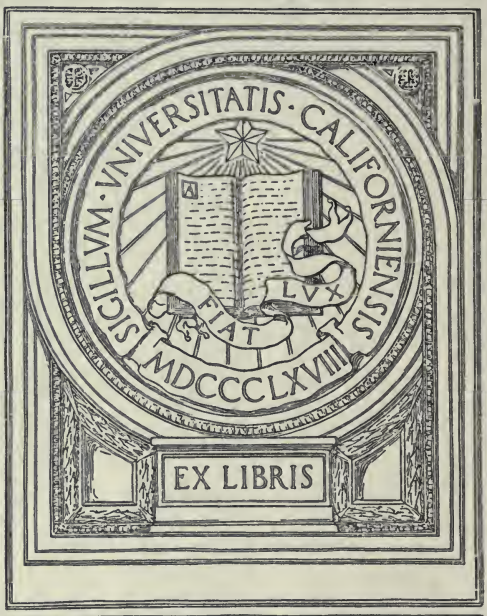

Tom Trouble *A Play in Four Acts*

by John Burley

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Tom Trouble

Tom Trouble *A Play in Four Acts by John Burley*

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

LONDON: HENDERSONS
66 CHARING CROSS ROAD
1920

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AUTHOR'S NOTE.

No attempt has been made to reproduce the dialect, which is merely indicated.

Gift of Mrs. De Forrest H. Pockney

THE WHITEFRIARS PRESS, LTD., LONDON AND TONBRIDGE.
1920.

First produced at the Holborn Empire on March 15th, 1920, by Lewis Casson and Bruce Winston during their season of Daily Matinées.

CAST.

Mary Hay . .	SYBIL THORNDIKE.
Jim Bradley . .	LEWIS CASSON.
Thomas Thornton .	NICHOLAS HANNEN.
Rev. C. Williams .	HUGH BAYLY.
Mrs. Hay . .	CLARE GREET.
Hay, a Farmer .	BRUCE WINSTON.
Mrs. Thornton .	FLORENCE BUCKTON.
Mrs. Whittle . .	CICELY OATES.

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UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

TOM TROUBLE

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

CHARACTERS

MARY HAY.
JIM BRADLEY.
THOMAS THORNTON.
REV. C. WILLIAMS.
MRS. HAY. } Parents of Mary.
HAY, A FARMER. }
MRS. THORNTON. Mother of Thomas Thornton.
MRS. WHITTLE.

ACT I.

Twilight. Across the front of the stage runs a dry wall with a gateway in it. The gate is shut. Beyond the wall is the road and on the far side of the road another dry wall.

MARY *is leaning with her back against the gate-post, and* JIM *has her clasped hotly in his arms. The first sound on the stage is a smacking rustic kiss.* MARY *disengages herself violently, exclaiming "Ugh!" and rubbing her nose.* JIM *pulls her to him again. It is a passionate moment with him.*

MARY *twists her head from side to side, laughing.*

JIM. Now then, what are ye laughing at, lass?

MARY. Oh, Jim, yer moustache does tickle!

JIM. Tha shouldn't be noticing a bit of a thing like that when your chap's kissing you. Tha doesn't rightly know what love is, Mary. I shouldn't notice anything when I'm kissing you. I'm right off the ground then, sweetheart; nothing on earth would affect me. You brought me back right sudden like.

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MARY. Well, I think anybody'd notice being tickled, choose how, and whatever they was doing.

JIM. I'm sure your hair must 'ave tickled me many a time when I've just been kissing you under the ear there, and I've never noticed.

MARY. My hair's not bristly stuff like your moustache, I'm sure.

JIM. Nay, you're splitting hairs now, Mary, let alone comparing them. You didn't ought to fetch a chap back out of 'eaven with a bump like that just because 'is moustache tickled yer mouth.

MARY. It wasn't my mouth, it wer my nose—now, could you bear 'aving yer nose tickled, Jim ? I'm sure you couldn't, not even in Heaven.

JIM. Right upsettin' it is. I feel all curdled with the bump. When you're putting yer soul into kissing yer love and she jumps back and says " yer moustache tickles ! "

MARY. Well, it does.

JIM. And what if it does ? Can I 'elp it ? And it was ye that made me grow it and all. Are we barn to 'ave this sort of a set-out every time that I get soft about ye ?

MARY. Not if yer moustache doesn't tickle mi nose.

JIM. Well, it's bound to, yer nose is so near yer mouth tha knows.

MARY. Now then, don't ye get insultin' about my upper lip bein' short !

JIM. Nay, but anybody's nose is near their mouth. I'd best shave it off, I reckon.

MARY. Ye'll do nowt o't sort. I willunt 'ave owt to do wi' a barefaced man, so there !

JIM. Well, wot can I do, then—if I 'ave to 'ave a moustache and it tickles ?

MARY. It's no need to tickle.

JIM. Ay, and grass 'as no need to grow ; but ye say that it does.

MARY. And I say it's no need to tickle.

JIM. I suppose ye've tried other moustaches and they doesn't tickle.

MARY. And wot if I 'ave ?

JIM. Well—I shall want to know whose.

MARY. Well, I 'ave, and ye won't, then. It's no affair of yours who I've kissed—I'm not your wife *yet*, so don't you reckon to come it over me, young man.

JIM. Oh ! That's t'way of it, then ? You've always led me to believe that I was t'first chap that courted you.

MARY. I've never said owt to let you think that, *I'm* sure.

JIM. Well, ye've concealed that ye've loved afore, anyway.

MARY. Loved afore ! Do you think ye 'ave to love to be kissed ? Ye great fool you, anybody'd think ye was a lad yet.

JIM. Well, I call it deceitful like, walking out with a chap for a twel'month like you've done with me and never a word about 'aving kissed afore.

MARY. Deceitful ! 'Ave I ever said 'at you were t'first chap 'at kissed me ? And if I've said nowt about wot 'appened afore I took up with you, why should I ? What's it to do with you anyways ?

JIM. You've led me to think that I were t'first chap 'at ever loved you.

MARY. I 'aven't !

JIM. You 'ave.

MARY. You'll be calling me a liar next.

JIM. Well, it's not so truthful, isn't mekkin' a chap think he's t'first when there's been another afore him.

MARY. I never did.

JIM. Well, an' who knows best, then, what I believed?

MARY. Nay, yer a gormless idiot, I think, ye'd believe owt.

JIM. Aye, I were fool enough to believe you, seemingly. They telled me at home that a chap courting was a fool and always thought his girl an angel. And I said I knowed 'at ye weren't that, but ye were t'lass I fancied. But I thought ye was truthful all t'same. They'll say ye've med a fool on me. And they'll be right. I expect that other fellow wi' a moustache is laughing at me.

MARY. That I'm sure he isn't.

JIM. P'raps it was in memory of 'im that ye made me grow a moustache. P'raps ye fancy bein' kissed by a moustache.

MARY. Seems like it, doesn't it, after all this bother over yours ?

JIM. Well, but ye say 'at 'is didn't tickle.

MARY. And you say I'm a liar, so you'll p'raps think it did.

JIM. We don't seem to be agreein' so well this evening, Mary. And us at the "Marrying Gate" and all.

MARY. Well, who called me a liar ?

JIM. Now then, tha knows it's too much being stopped in a kiss like that.

MARY. Who called me a liar ? I don't see 'at I'm to wed a chap 'at calls me a liar.

JIM. Well, ye were very deceiving, Mary. 'Appen yer didn't mean it. 'Oo was it, then ?

MARY. And I'm noan barn to tell yer, and I'm not deceivin' nor a liar, and I'll thank you to 'pologise.

JIM. Well, and I think you were, then.

MARY. And I think you're a clumsy, inquisitive fool, then, so there ; and you'll please stop bothering me in future, for I want naught of you.

JIM. Oh, so that's way on it, is it ? Well, I'm not particular, then. Happen you'd best find a chap who's moustache doesn't tickle you. Or p'raps you would get yon chap 'at 'as just t'right stuff round 'is mouth. P'raps 'e's wed by now tho'.

MARY. As it 'appens, he is, then.

JIM. Now that's hard lines. Chucked you up, did 'e ? A dirty trick, I reckon.

MARY. And now you're bound to do the same, or would 'ave done if I 'adn't chucked you up first for an inquisitive, interfering thing. (*She turns to the gate with her back to* JIM.) Go on now, I've done wi' you. Don't bother me.

JIM. Good night, Miss Hay.

MARY. Good night, Mr. Bradley.

(JIM *goes off down the road, whistling.* MARY *hums a tune. When* JIM'S *steps have died away she stops humming, turns to look after him, turns back, looking out at the audience, fidgets, and then with a little wail begins to cry. Shortly some one is heard approaching and whistling a tune. Enter* THOMAS THORNTON.)

T. T. Hullo! who's this alone at the "Marrying Gate" ?

(*No reply except a slight sniffle followed by nose blowing.*)

Bit upset are you ? Who is it, then ?

MARY. It's Miss Hay, Mr. Thornton.

T. T. And wot's amiss, Miss Hay ?

MARY. There's naught amiss, thank you all t'same. What made you think there was ?

T. T. Well, I thought you was crying, and lasses don't come to the "Marrying Gate" alone as a usual thing, tha knows.

MARY. You seem to know a lot about it. Who says I did come alone, then ? They tell me there's lots of girls come here with you and you've left 'em here alone.

T. T. 'As 'e left you, then ? 'Ave you been fratching ? Eh ! Lovers' quarrels, lovers' quarrels !

MARY. Well, better soon than late, I reckon. If a chap's going to call you a liar 'e'd better do it afore ye've wed 'im, ye can be easier rid of 'im.

T. T. Well now, then ! And what did *ye* call '*im*, then, I wonder ?

MARY. You may well ! Nasty, inquisitive thing, wanting to know whether 'e was the first.

T. T. And was 'e ?

MARY. What, and you and all ! Well, men's curious, I *do* think !

T. T. P'raps I'm thinking a bit different to 'im tho'. I'm *not* one that's wanting first kisses. I like 'em a bit flavoury myself.

MARY. Well, if ever ! I think you just say that to get a name for being a spark.

T. T. I've got that name already, and I'm none the better or the worse of it. If there's owt worth 'aving I'm 'aving it. Life's a bit short, tha knaws, and that

eternity they tell on has a dull sound about it. It meks me think of one o' them days w'en there's thunder about. There'll not be anything much to do and we shall all 'ave 'eadaches.

MARY. Eh, 'ow you do go on!

T. T. Can I stop and talk to you a bit? 'Appen I might cheer you up some.

MARY. I don't know as I want cheering up, thanks all the same. I'm not *so* dependent on 'aving a man about.

T. T. Well, but a man's good company for a lass, I think.

MARY. Depends on what sort of a man 'e is. If 'e's one that wants yer to answer a catechism!

T. T. Well, but wenches is just as bad. I've always been bothered wi' questions about my goin's on.

MARY. I shouldn't 'a thought there was so much need to ask. They're fairly well known are your goings on. Why, look at your name even. Not much need to ask a chap the lasses have christened "Trouble" whether 'e's ever kissed a girl afore.

T. T. Nor no need to ask a chap 'at kisses as well as I do, neither. I shouldn't think 'at your Jim knows 'ow to kiss a girl.

MARY. 'Ow did you know that, then?

T. T. Well, it's easy seen is that. It takes a bit of devilment and a bit of experience. I never could think what a lass of spirit like thee wanted walking with a chap like Jim.

MARY. You seem to 'ave thought a lot about it!

T. T. Well, a chap would think about you, yer know, Mary. There's not many in t'village as nice looking as ye, or as cheerful like and lively.

MARY. (*Tossing her head.*) Tst! Tst! (*Steps are heard approaching.*) Trying it off on me.

(*Enter the* PARSON.)

WILLIAMS. Aha! From the sounds I heard this is well called the "Marrying Gate"! Kisses lead to marriage, or should do, or should do. I sometimes wonder if they always do, however, in this village. I grieve to think that there have been young people who think a visit to this gate takes the place of the marriage service. And whom have we here this evening? Ah, Mary, is it you? Dear me, you must be careful of your throat in these evening airs. The choir would miss your voice on Sunday. And who is with you? Thornton! Beware, my man. Or perhaps rumour wrongs you. I ought not to trust to rumour.

T. T. And wot does it say about *me*, Mr. Williams? Nought to my harm, I'm sure.

WILLIAMS. It says, sir, it says—but I cannot tell you what it says in the presence of Mary. Come and see me one evening. If rumour is true, then I must have a serious talk with you. If it is not true, then we must contrive to stop the slanders. What a wonderful night! Are you two keeping company together?

T. T. Meaning no offence, Mr. Williams, we're hardly ready to go to the parson yet.

MARY. We only met by chance this evening, Mr. Williams. We'd not been stood talking five minutes.

WILLIAMS. No offence, no offence! The shepherd and his flock, you know. Who should be more interested in the lives and happiness of his people than I? I am thinking of having an anthem the Sunday after next, you know, Mary. Well, good-

night, good-night. Take care of your throat, Mary. Good-night!

MARY. }
T. T. } Good-night!

T. T. He thought I wer kissing you, did t'owd chap.

MARY. You and your kissing! You are always talking about kissing.

T. T. Well, there's worse subjects of conversation than kissing. And then I don't care to get the name for kissing girls that I don't kiss. There's fuss enough about the ones I do.

MARY. Well, there's a fairish few of them if you've kissed all that's telled on you.

T. T. The old motto about kissing and telling's only for men's obedience it seems to me. A lass is no sooner kissed than she's boasting of it to her mates, I think.

MARY. I don't know so much about boasting. There's a good few that'll rue the time that Thomas Trouble Thornton kissed 'em. I'll take very good care that you don't kiss me, my man.

T. T. Who's talked of me kissing you, now?

MARY. Well, I think you've been kind of broaching the subject ever sin' we got agate talking.

T. T. My word, but you're a smart lass to see that, then! Who'd a thowt ye'd know that was wot I was leadin' up to? But tha knaws I wer a long way off askin' for one yet, Mary.

MARY. I should think so, indeed! The idea!

(T. T. *steps forward to her.*)

T. T. Nay, I'm not such a fool, lass. It doesn' do to ask for a kiss. I shouldn't like you to be forced

to say "yes," and I shouldn't take a "no." When I wants a kiss I just takes it.

(*He gets close to her; as he puts his arms round her she gives him a sound box on the ear. He steps back.*)

MARY. No, you don't. (*She moves to pass him; he blocks the way.*) Let me pass, please.

T. T. So you don't fancy being kissed by a real man, then.

MARY. I'm not just for any one's kissing that has a mind, Thomas Thornton, and now you know it, I reckon.

T. T. Well, p'raps I was a bit sudden like. Tho' I did lead up to it, tha knaws.

MARY. I should never let any one kiss me the first time that I was out with 'im, that's certain.

T. T. Eh, wot waste! Ye can never catch up an evenin' lost like that.

MARY. Not under *no* circumstances.

(*Enter* JIM, *moodily looking at the ground; hearing voices at the gate he looks up, and seeing Mary, starts and peers to see if it is really she.* MARY *fidgets.*)

JIM. Well, I'm capped! If Mary hasn't found another chap in this bit o' time. It shows what I've lost, does that. No sooner 'ave we twined than another chap's after 'er.

T. T. We've been 'avin a bit of a chat, 'ave Mary and I, Jim. T'parson's dropped in for a bit an' all.

JIM. By gum! 'appen he married yer, did 'e? Mary's no time-waster seemingly.

T. T. No, we didn't get wed. Mr. Williams was

very anxious about 'er not getting a sore throat for Sunday tho'. Most kind 'e was.

JIM. Oh, 'ave *you* got a sore throat, then ? They're catching things. And I 'ope Tom's moustache doesn't tickle, Mary.

MARY. Nay, 'e knows 'ow to manage it, does Tom. Ye'd best see 'ow it should be done, Jim, so as the next lass 'at you kiss wouldn't laugh at yer. Come 'ere, don't be shy. Now, Tom, show 'im !

(*She puts up her mouth for* T. T. *to kiss her.* JIM, *fascinated, steps forward.* T. T. *kisses her, slowly, on the mouth.*)

MARY. There, that's 'ow to do it, my lad.

JIM. (*Falling back.*) Oh, damn all women ! I never thought you'd serve me that way, Mary.

(*He turns on his heel and goes out. Silence till his steps die away. Then* MARY *utters a sob and turns away from* T. T.)

MARY. Oh ! (*Crying.*) I'm a beast, I'm a beast ! Wot a trick to serve a decent lad !

(T. T. *goes up to her and leans over her ; he puts his hand on her shoulder.*)

T. T. Never mind, lass. Don't take on so. Chaps isn't worth lasses' tears. And 'e isn't much, isn't Jim. (*He tries to turn her to him.*) Let your Tom kiss you better, darlin'.

MARY. Don't you dare ! Kiss you ! Do you think *I* want to kiss you ? You're very much mistaken. I only did it to spite 'im. And I love 'im, I love 'im ! Jim's the only lad in the world for me.

T. T. Nay—I'm not to be treat that fashion. Tom Thornton's not the lad to be played with for a wench's whim. Come 'ere and kiss me.

MARY. Not I! Me kiss a lad that's made playthings of half the lasses in the village! Let me pass, if you please.

T. T. Now, Mary dear, don't be 'ard on a lad. You shouldn't believe all you 'ear, you know.

MARY. If I'd believed the half of it, it'd be enough to be my warning.

T. T. Well, now then! Did my moustache tickle?

MARY. No.

T. T. And did Jim's?

MARY. Yes.

T. T. And there you are, you see. If I'd been a tame thing like Jim, I shouldn't have learnt 'ow to kiss. Eh, and it's a shame, too, for Mary Hay should be kissed. You're just lovely to kiss, Mary.

MARY. Get away with you; you'll not come over me that way—let me get home!

T. T. Nay, you must listen to me a bit. A lovely lass like you, Mary, has no right to go kissing a chap like me as you did. You've kind of enflamed me with love. I never loved any one before like I love you now.

MARY. Quick work, I think. I must be a right fascinater! Well, and if I don't love you it's your look out, I think. If you hadn't been begging kisses I'd never 'a done it. I don't love you *one little bit*, Mr. Tom Trouble, so there! It's Jim I love, and I've been a fool quarrelling with him. I want naught of you.

T. T. Well, I want summat of you. I want another kiss, and I'm barn to 'ave one.

MARY. You're not that!

T. T. And I say I am. I'm going to take one now.

(*He moves towards her.*)

MARY. Now then! There's some one coming. I shall tell 'em you won't let me get by.

(TOM *turns, and she takes the opportunity and is about to slip by him, when—*)

MARY. (*Whispering.*) It's Jim!

T. T. Aye—with a lass and all. Oh, you and your Jim!

(MARY *draws back as the couple approaches, and watches* JIM, *who has a girl on his arm.*)

MARY. Good evenin', Mr. Bradley! Going for another walk?

JIM. It's not *so* dark you can't see, is it?

(*Silence while* JIM *and the girl walk on.*)

MARY. (*Laughing rather hysterically.*) What about that kiss you were going to take, Tom lad? I don't care what 'appens me now.

(T. T. *kisses her.*)

You know my dad can't abear the sound of your name. If you're going to kiss me like that we'd better move on a bit, somewhere folks don't pass by all the time.

T. T. It's a bit of a funny evenin' we're 'avin', Mary. Changeable like to-night, aren't yer?

MARY. If you'll just hold your tongue and keep your mouth for kissing, you'll suit me fine to-night. Come on, Tom Trouble!

(*She catches him by the arm and they move off.*)

(*Curtain.*)

ACT II.

SCENE: THE LIVING ROOM OF A COUNTRY COTTAGE IN YORKSHIRE.

MRS. HAY *is seated on an oak settle at right angles to the kitchen grate. At the opposite side of the fireplace is* MR. HAY, *smoking a pipe and reading the "Farmers' Annual." Behind him is a grandfather clock in the corner and the window of the room, with the door alongside it. In the window is a cheap lamp. In the middle of the room is a square table with a red cotton cover.*

HAY. Wot's come o' Mary?

MRS. H. She'll be out with Jim, I reckon.

HAY. Are they barn to be wed, does ta think, Annie?

MRS. H. I 'opes as 'ow they be. She's right fond, is Mary, and I think Jim fancies 'er more nor a bit. And he's a nice everyday young man, is Jim. Not just one o' them fancy lads that's all bright waistcoat and empty pockets.

HAY. She's a gran' lass, is Mary. We s'all miss 'er more nor wot I likes to think of.

MRS. H. We shall that. But they've not bin courtin' so long yet, tha knaws. 'Appen a twelvemonth or 'appen two year. Now let me think on then. It'll be two year coom next feast 'at she telled me 'at Jim 'ad asked 'er to walk out.

HAY. An' 'e's a likely lad, is Jim. I wer reet glad w'en shoo took oop wi' 'im. There's more nor a few about 'ere 'at lass o' mine should 'ave naught to do wi'. There's yon Thomas Thornton now. If it 'ad been 'im I should 'a been right mad. I'd 'a cleared 'im out of 'ouse and all.

MRS. H. Nay, I think 'at all Mary does is right to you, Joshua.

HAY. Well, I must say I'm a bit foolish over 'er at times, lass. An' thou is, too, and all. It's a bit queer 'ow us old ones, that's done wi' our adventurin's, get took up wi' the young 'uns and their goin's on. Old folks that's got no childer's only get one bit of youth. We that 'ave got young 'uns 'ave two lives, in a way of speakin'. We've our own excitements when we're young and then us gets 'em all over again when the kids is comin' up.

MRS. H. 'Ow you do go on, Josh!

HAY. Well, look at t'cows, then. It's a uninterestin' life is a cow's, I reckon. And then look at yon old white cow of ours. It were near dying last back end, and then when she calved I left t'calf wi' 'er, 'stead of takin' it away and milkin' 'er—and she's a different cow to-day. She's got a interest in life.

MRS. H. You spoil our Mary to my way of thinkin'.

HAY. Now then, wot do yer mean by that? I know it's customary for folk to keep on tryin' to lead their young 'uns the way they think they should go. But what's t'use? What's good for one isn't good for another, and they oft know best what's good for theirsens. See wot a fool a old 'en looks tryin' to keep ducklings out of t'pond. Some things that'd drown thee wouldn't wet Mary.

MRS. H. If all folks was of your way of thinkin' there'd be no children 'ud grow up.

HAY. I'm aware of that, my dear, and I fancy that if I 'adn't you cluckin' over your chick for a warnin' to me I might do a bit myself.

(*Enter* JIM. *He sits down wearily and dejectedly.*)

HAY. Wot brings you 'ere, lad? Missis said you'd be out wi' Mary.

(JIM *shakes his head.*)

JIM. I knew she wer out. (*There is a pause.*) See here, both of yer, I'm right fond o' Mary. I think there isn't another like 'er; I think the world on 'er. Have I lost 'er? That's what I want ter know. Can I get 'er back?

MRS. H. Nay, Jim, we thought ye two wer walkin' out regular.

JIM. Ay, we were an' all. An' I thought sure as God made little apples we'd be wed this year; and now where are we?

MR. HAY. Wot's oop, lad?

JIM. Five or six week sin' we 'ad a bit o' botheration, and now she willun't speak to me nor look at me sideways even.

MRS. H. Five or six weeks sin'? Why, we'd no idea! Who'd 'ave thought 'at our Mary'd be so mumchancy?

JIM. Is she oft like that, missus?

MRS. H. Quarrelsome she never was. Best tempered lass hereabouts, tho' it's her mother that says it. She's smiling and cheerful even on washing day, is Mary.

JIM. That wasn't just rightly what I was referrin' to, missus. Wot I 'ad in mind was 'er deceivin' you into thinkin' she wer walkin' out wi' me.

MRS. H. Nay, it's not like 'er a bit, isn't that, not a bit like our Mary.

JIM. 'Oo did she walk out with afore she walked out wi' me, then?

HAY. Oho! Jealousy is it, my lad? I allus think

there's summat a bit cowardly about jealousy. It's like as if ye dursen't 'ave folk admire a field of oats 'at ye've growed lest they spoil it lookin' at it. Myself I like to think 'at there's others 'at admires wot I've got.

JIM. Nay, it's not just jealousy 'at's at bottom o' this, Mr. Hay.

HAY. Wot war it all abart, then ?

MRS. H. Nay, father, what does it matter wot it were about, the worst botherations is always about nowt.

JIM. I don't know what it was about. We both on us said all we could think on to lay tongue to. But yon's not t'worst on it. We was both right mad and I went walking wi' another lass and she's walkin' out with another chap. An' I can make nowt on it, choose 'ow. An' she's all the world to me, is Mary. I nobbut walked out the one night wi' yon other lass.

MRS. H. Who was the lass, Jim ?

JIM. I don't think I ought to tell you, Mrs. Hay. 'Appen the lass might not care for yer to know.

HAY. Well, lad, you must ask the missus here to help you. You have my good will, but I must go and milk t'cows.

(*Exit* HAY.)

MRS. H. (*Making quite sure* H. *is out of earshot.*) 'Oo's chap 'at Mary's going with, then, Jim ?

JIM. Nay, I can't tell that.

MRS. H. Wot for ?

JIM. It's her news is that, I reckon.

MRS. H. Nay, you can tell 'er mother, Jim.

JIM. An' so can she, if she's a mind. But I reckon folk keep secrets tightest from their mothers and dads —some secrets, leastways.

MRS. H. Mary was never one for secrets from her mother.

JIM. Well, she's kept this one a two-thri weeks, anyways. An' that's a deal for a lass. Are ye barn to help me, Mrs. Hay ?

MRS. H. I don't know fer sure. You're a good lad, Jim, and we'd 'a bin well pleased to see 'er marry you. But yer knaw, t'other chap might be a better, and she might like 'im better. I'm not one o' them that believes in fussing a girl into marryin' a chap 'at she doesn't fancy. If she fancies him more than you I'm not for pushin' her into your arms, my lad. And she's a sensible lass and not likely to take up with a wrong 'un.

JIM. Ye're trying to mek me tell 'oo 'e is. An' I shall not do it, Mrs. Hay, tho' if I was to do so you'd be fain enough to help me, I'm sure. And there's none that'll love 'er more nor me, Mrs. Hay.

MRS. H. Well na', then, I shall consider it over, Jim. An' if you and she's quarrelled you'd best be goin'—for if she were to think you'd been askin' 'er mother's help she'd have no more to say to you. Women like a chap to seem to do things for himself.

JIM. She'd be flattered enough to know that I was botherin' about 'er, I'll be bound. But I'll be going, Mrs. Hay. An' ye'll remember that I'm wantin' you, and only you, for a mother-in-law, now won't you ? There's no other woman in this village that I could fancy for a mother-in-law, knowing you as I do, Mrs. Hay. And I'm countin' on you, mind.

MRS. H. Get away with you now, and look sharp about it for Mary'll be here any minute.

(*Exit* JIM.)

MRS. H. (*Sitting down and emphasising each name*

with her fingers on her knee, and speaking half to herself.) Harry Butterfield, Jo' Shackleton, Albert Pighills—no 'e's goin' with Martha Ann Bradley, and Bert Whitehead, and there's always that Thomas Thornton.

(*Enter* MARY.)

An' oo's tha been out with, lass? Ye've not been out wi' Jim, fer I saw him pass the winder just a few minutes sin'.

MARY. No, I've not been out with Jim. I've been out with Trouble.

MRS. H. What does ta mean?

MARY. They call him Trouble; they say he brings trouble on us all.

MRS. H. But Jim's your lad, ain't he, Mary? You're not walkin' out with two at once, surely. No lass of mine would never do a thing like that, I'm sure.

MARY. I'm not walking out with Jim no more.

MRS. H. What for? Have ye been quarrelling, or have ye found a better lad than Jim? Ye'd find that a job, I think—a right everyday sort of chap is Jim.

MARY. Jim and me's parted for good. I've been going with another fellow. A chap that's got a bit more devilment to him than Jim, and that doesn't call names.

MRS. H. Well, what call had you to keep it from your mother, Mary? I expect he's a nice enough young fellow if you like him better than Jim.

MARY. Who said I liked him better than Jim? I only said that he had more devilment. And as for not telling you, amn't I telling you now? And a nice row there'll be when father knows. He doesn't fancy Tom, doesn't father.

MRS. H. Tha doesn't mean Thomas Thornton? Tha's never been out wi' Thomas Thornton, Mary? Eh? But yer father'd be mad at yer if 'e knew.

MARY. I've been walking out with him this six weeks now. And father's no call to be mad at all. Thomas Thornton's a right decent feller.

MRS. H. 'E's nowt o't sort. What do they call 'im Trouble for, then? And wot 'ave yer done wi' Jim, Mary?

MARY. Wot 'ave I done wi' Jim? Jim's done wi' me, and I've finished wi' him an' all. We've parted have Jim and I, six week sin'.

MRS. H. Wot 'ave yer quarrelled about, then? Yer father likes Jim. 'E's fain fer you to marry Jim, and 'e fair 'ates the name of your Thomas Thornton.

(MARY *suddenly bursts into tears.*)

An' now wot's oop, lass? Ay, Mary, my dearie, wot's matter, lass?

MARY. I'm wishin' I 'adn't quarrelled wi' Jim. And it was all my fault and all, and I love 'im.

(*She suddenly dries up.*)

Nay, I'm a silly thing—'e's nowt, is Jim, and 'e were right rude to me, he wor, and I wean't 'ave nowt to do wi' him. I'm to marry Tom, I am.

MRS. H. Yer father'll never 'ear on it, Mary, so it's no good you tellin' that tale.

MARY. 'E'll 'ave to 'ear on it, then, for Tom I'm going to wed, if 'e'll 'ave me.

MRS. H. Wot dost 'a mean—thou never means to throw yourself at 'im, Mary? You're never going to demean yourself to ask him to marry you.

MARY. I've got to get him to marry me some way, mother.

MRS. H. What do you mean, "got to get him to marry"? Tha never means——?

MARY. Ye know well enough what I mean. Father'll be glad enough for me to marry Tom when 'e 'ears tell. I only 'opes as how Tom'll be willin', mother.

MRS. H. They do say 'at Tom Thornton's not one to marry a girl that he's got into trouble. They tell 'at Maggie Shackleton's child's his, and that her father prayed 'im to marry 'er. But you're a lot bonnier than she, and 'e knows 'at yer father's a warm man and can give you a bit for settin' up house.

MARY. You think 'e'll wed me, don't ye, mother?

MRS. H. Art sure, lass, 'at it's necessary?

MARY. Doctor says so.

MRS. H. Well, na then, lass, I'm sorry for yer dad, I am that. But 'e'll 'a to thoil it. I'm none sure that 'e will though. I'm thinking he may tell tha tha mun go through wi' t'disgrace rather nor marry that Thomas Thornton.

MARY. Then I shall drown myself, mother.

MRS. H. Don't talk so soft, lass, tha'll do nowt o't sort. We shall bring 'im round to it, thou and I. We'll talk to 'im to-night, or I will. Tha's best out o' t'way at first.

MARY. Tha'd best wait till I learn 'at Tom's willing, mother.

MRS. H. Hasn't tha said owt to 'im, then?

MARY. I 'aven't 'ad t'chance. I've nobbut just come from t'doctor.

MRS. H. Well, Mary, I'm right grieved, I am that. And to think we very near christened you Prudence.

MARY. Wot I'm puzzlin' over is, would Tom make

me a good 'usband, supposin' 'e's willin' to wed me, that is?

MRS. H. You should 'ave thought o' that before, my girl. If 'e's willin', you mun wed 'im. We've always got married when t'time came in my family. A girl can't go pickin' and choosin' when she's in your state, it's not decent.

MARY. But supposin' 'e was a chap that drunk all 'is wage?

MRS. H. Wot I says is, you've made your bed and you must lie on it. I'll 'ave none o' that talk, Mary. And Tom'll settle to be a decent lad once 'e's wed and all.

MARY. I'm noan so sure o' that. I think it's a kind of 'abit with 'im. As long as there's lasses Tom'll want to kiss 'em. I've no fancy for bein' one of a crowd. It's not so much 'at I should mind 'is kissin' other lasses, but I shouldn't like all t'village to know it.

MRS. H. I should think not indeed! The husband of our Mary kissin' all t'lasses o't village! But tha knaws, Mary, there's ways and ways of keeping a man in t'way 'e should go.

MARY. Ay, keepin' 'im there, I daresay, but it's gettin' 'im there that's t'botheration.

MRS. H. Well, I reckon you and me between us might do summat with 'im. And it's no use you talkin', Mary, you're going to 'ave to wed 'im, so there!

MARY. If!

MRS. H. You may well say "If" seein' 'e's so noted for bein' one o' them chaps that slips away so quick when it comes to t'marryin'. We must think on 'ow to set about it.

MARY. I'm more 'shamed to try to mek 'im marry me than ever I could be if he won't.

MRS. H. Don't talk such nonsense. Can't you see t'village pointing the finger of scorn at you for a lass that 'er chap wouldn't wed when the time came. Think on of ye walkin' down t'Main Street wi' a babby in your arms and no man to account for it.

MARY. (*Wincing at all this.*) Nay, mother, don't, don't, don't! Do you think I've no feelin's. I'll wed 'im if he'll 'a me, and we mun mek 'im 'a me.

MRS. H. Now then. T'first thing to do is to get 'im comin' to t'ouse. We want to get 'im comfortable like i' t'front o't fire. If we can get 'im to come and warm 'is knees we'll soon mek 'im feel at 'ome. And then, if we can nobbut get 'im standin' up wi' 'is back to t'fire 'e'll soon be liftin' 'is coat tails and warmin' 'is backside. And when a man does that e's in a fair way to want a 'ouse of 'is own.

MARY. But father'll never let 'im in at our door, mother.

MRS. H. Trust me for that, lass. Thee tell me w'en 'e's comin' and I shall tell yer dad that Mr. Thornton looked in when 'e were out to ask 'is advice about a cow, knowin' that all says that Mr. Hay's the most knowledgable man hereabouts, and that 'e's comin' in again in a bit. And then yer dad's a reet Dalesman; 'e can never be rude to a chap in 'is own 'ouse, can't yer dad. And now I must be goin' down to t'shop for we've no candles. An' you just be makin' up yer mind 'at ye've got to marry Thomas an' all.

(*Exit* MRS. HAY. MARY *sits at the table with her head in her hands. She begins to cry quietly. Then shakes herself and pulls herself together.*

MR. HAY *puts his head round the inner door.*)

HAY. Where's yer mother, lass ?

MARY. Gone down t'village.

HAY. T'white cow's in calf.

MARY. Oh.

HAY. Nay, I expected you to be better pleased than that. Yer mother will be.

MARY. I'm pleased enough. But she's been in calf afore and will be again.

HAY. Aye, and there's good money to put clothes on your back with, lass, every time that she does calve.

MARY. I don't know that I care *so* much about money, dad.

HAY. Yer mean yer don't care so much where th'money comes from. Yer care for t'clothes it buys. And then I think myself that there's summat pleasurin' in things getting born.

MARY. Aye, for them as doesn't bear them.

HAY. Nay, lass, thou shouldn't talk that way, you're ower young. And if young things doesn't frame to give life it'll be a poor do for t'world, Ah reckon.

MARY. Does ta think 'at we want a world at all ? for I don't.

HAY. When t'world end comes it wants to come sudden-like, with a bang; not with only old folk pottering it out, shaking their heads. Now then, ye can tell yer mother about t'white cow, for I'm going down t'village to drink t'owd beeast's 'ealth.

(*Enter* MRS. THORNTON, *a severe looking woman of fifty. She is the widow of the schoolmaster, and rather a superior woman.*)

MRS. THORNTON. Mary Hay, are you going to

marry my Tom, or are you going to jilt him like the others have done ?

MARY. Jilt him ? Who's jilted him ?

MRS. T. You know well enough who's left him when it came to marrying, and who's taken his child and kept it all for herself and left him a lone man and childless.

MARY. Well, ah niver ! That's a tale that's new, that is. It isn't Tom 'at won't marry when it comes to t'point, then, and leaves poor girls in trouble ? I never did 'ear such a tale.

MRS. T. I don't know what tittle-tattle you've heard. My lad's a good lad and never did any one any harm. And I want to know if you're for marrying him or no.

MARY. I'll answer that question when he asks me, which 'e 'asn't done yet, and won't do.

MRS. T. Ah, but tell me, will you marry him when he does ? He fears to ask you lest you say "no" to him.

MARY. Wot ! Your Tom afeard to ask for wot 'e wants. Nay, Mrs. Thornton, seems to me you don't know so much about your Tom !

MRS. T. I suppose you think you know him because you've made him walk with you and have kissed him and wheedled him.

MARY. Ah believe you really think that he's like that, don't you ? And you really believe that Martha Ann Wright wouldn't marry him when he'd got 'er into trouble, nor Ethel Dickson, nor Sissie Simpson. 'E's a poor, innocent, misled lamb to 'is mother, seemingly.

MRS. T. What had he to do with them indeed ! Do you think he'd go about with girls like them ?

And it's their fault and all. He'd never harm any girl. It seems any trollop in the village will father her child on my Tom if she can't get a man to marry her in time. I'm sure you know well enough that my Tom's a good lad, now don't you, Mary, and a good husband he'd be, too. And if I encourage him to ask you to wed him you'll not say "no" to him, will you, my girl?

MARY. I'll answer him that question when *he* asks me, Mrs. Thornton. And I'll tell you this, that I'm not so sure about a lad that can't keep away from the lasses, as *I* know if you don't. But I'll think a sight more of him if he asks me to wed him, as he should do after what's gone past.

MRS. T. He'd be good to you, Mary, and so should I. And there's a nice little bit of money to set you up, too. He'll be asking you before the week's out. And I'll be glad to welcome you, my dear.

(*She kisses* MARY *and goes out.* MARY *goes to window and looks out after her.* MRS. HAY *comes bustling in.*)

MRS. H. Wot—not laid t'table! Nay, I call that a shame. Wot 'ave yer been doin'?

MARY. Mrs. Thornton paid me a visit.

(MRS. HAY *drops all her parcels.*)

MRS. H. Mrs. Thornton!

MARY. Aye.

MRS. H. Wot did she want, then?

MARY. Wants me to wed 'er Trouble. I think mothers are a bit daft about their sons. I said summat about other lassies and she was up in arms like and said he didn't do it, and it was the lasses' fault that 'e did, both in t'same breath like.

MRS. H. Mothers and sons, fathers and daughters,

I reckon. I never 'ad no sons, but yer father's soft about you, my lass.

MARY. 'E'll 'ave need to be, seemingly, these next few weeks.

MRS. H. Well, na' then, we'll manage that, Ah think. And ye said ye'd be glad enough, I reckon.

MARY. Ah said nowt o't soart. Ah said Ah'd answer Tom and not 'er. Ah'm not givin' missen away, mother.

MRS. H. Well, 'appen you encouraged 'er a bit ?

MARY. She said Tom 'ud be axin' me this week, and 'at she'd mek me welcome an' all.

MRS. H. Well, I *am* glad. There'll be a bit of brass, I reckon, and she's a nice woman, is Mrs. Thornton. And they've a nice 'ouse and all. I think she'd best move and let you and Tom 'ave that 'ouse. It's right nice furnished, tha knaws. And it's nice and 'andy for 'ere an' all. You'll be slippin' in naws and thens.

MARY. Ah sudn't count chickens afore they're 'atched, mother.

(*Enter* MRS. WHITTLE.)

MRS. WH. Good evening both. 'Ave you 'eard ? Eh, it's shocking ! Them 'eavy motors. Poor lad, 'is mother'll be grievin' even tho' 'e was allus a wild one.

MRS. H. Has there 'appened an accident or summat, Mrs. Whittle, then ?

MRS. WH. Haven't you heard, then ? Nay, as I was comin' up t'street just a ten minutes or so agone I 'eard a great shout, and I never took no notice, and then I saw a chap runnin' wi' a white face and I turned round, and there was a great motor and a lot of folks stood round. And 'e's dead an' all. Right under

the wheel 'e went, right over 'is chest. Poor lad, and 'im so 'ealthy and fine lookin' an' all. Thomas Thornton it was, ye know, the feller that they used to call "lasses' trouble."

(MARY *and her mother stare at each other in horror.* MARY *faints.*)

(*Curtain.*)

ACT III.

SCENE AS IN ACT II.

MRS. THORNTON *standing in grim black at the door.* MARY *turning from the fire at the sound of the opening door.*

MRS. THORNTON. My son's dead. (MARY *nods.*) Did you not love him that you do not weep ?

MARY. I could weep for you.

MRS. T. Did you not love him, Mary ?

MARY. I don't know.

MRS. T. You don't know. What sort of a girl are you ?

MARY. I know I love another lad, and Tom——

MRS. T. Well ?

MARY. I don't know . . . I 'ad a feelin' for Tom. Yes, Ah loved 'im, choose 'oo says yer can't love two at once't. T'other lad minds me of sun and apple blossom, Tom made me feel like I was in the big wind on the moor. W'en yer go with the big wind ye're all uplifted. Yer can lean yer shoulders back onto its strength an' go faster than you ever thought to go. An' then there's the coming back. All struggle is that,

with cleanness blown on you. And if you're bested a bit now an' again—well, it's God's force, isn't it? that bests you.

MRS. T. You thought that of him, and do not seem to grieve?

MARY. Who grieves for the wind when it's gone? We turn to thinkin' of sun and flowers that's to come.

MRS. T. I grieve for the wind, as you call him. I want his hair under my hands. I want the flesh and bone I bore, and I have nothing of him. Mary, have you anything of his? They say you fainted when you heard he was gone. Had you and he mated? Do you carry his child? (*Her voice rushes on.*) I want something of him. He was all I had, and he's left me nothing. Mary—Mary, give me his child. Mary, I think you've his child, and I want it, for he loved you—he cared nothing for those others. You were his love. Promise me his child, Mary!

MARY. If it's his, it's mine, too.

MRS. T. Then you carry it? Ah, give me the child, Mary. I want my son's child, for my son is gone from me.

MARY. If it's his, it's mine, too.

MRS. T. Marry your sun and blossom and give me the child of the wind.

MARY. 'Ow if it isn't the child of the wind, then?

MRS. T. But it is. The wind is stronger than the sun, Mary.

MARY. I don't know I'm sure. But I aren't giving my child to any one. What does ta think me? Do you think 'at because your Tom could mek me feel wild and windswept while I was loving another chap that I'm light? Does ta think 'at becos I can love

two men 'at I can't love a child. 'Appen I wer wicked to love Tom at all w'en Ah loved Jim best, but it isn't for you to say so. And it won't stop me loving my child.

MRS. T. You can't love Tom's child as much as I. You must give me the child. He wasn't your husband.

MARY. And wot difference does that mek to the child, pray? Tom didn't even bother to know if there were going to be one.

MRS. T. But you'll marry the other man, and then you'll give me the child?

MARY. 'Appen 'e won't 'ave me w'en 'e knows.

MRS. T. See! You and I will go away together and when the child is born you shall come back alone and marry the other man, and the child shall stay with me.

MARY. Ah think ye're a queer woman, Mrs. Thornton —you that's so mad on your own child and wants to rob another woman of hers.

(*Enter* MRS. HAY.)

Mother, 'ere's Mrs. Thornton says she's that sure 'at I'm carryin' Tom's child and I must give it to 'er when it's born!

MRS. H. Well I never! Well, Mrs. Thornton, I think grievin's turned you queer—wantin' a lass to give away 'er baby.

MRS. T. Oh, Mrs. Hay! you don't want your daughter to be shamed by a fatherless child. Let me take her away and no one shall ever know.

MRS. H. Thank you kindly, madam, but we'll 'ave no talk of disgrace, if *you* please. And no hide and seek and no takin' children away. We're not cuckoos in this 'ouse; wot we bears we cares for. I'll trouble

you to close my door behind you, grieved though we are for your misfortune.

MRS. T. Oh, Mary, Mary! you must be good to me even if I've wronged you. He loved you and you're all I know of that calls him to my mind.

(*Exit* MRS. THORNTON.)

MRS. H. Well, if ever——

(MARY *drops into a chair before the fire and stares into it.*)

MARY. Seems like a bit of world 'ad got pushed round me and turned upsides, mother. Time was w'en there was lots of things in my mind, and which way I turned there was something to pleasure me. And now it seems there's naught in my world but folks and grief. There's you and father and Mrs. Thornton and me, and I think 'appen Jim's grievin' a bit.

MRS. H. Do you know Jim was round here a week since?

MARY. What was 'e seekin'?

MRS. H. Nay, I don't know.

MARY. Well, I suppose he'd not called in to say it were a fine day.

MRS. H. I don't know that he had.

MARY. Happen 'e comed in to tell you he was going to be wed.

MRS. H. Nay, he hadn't that neither.

MARY. Did he talk about gettin' wed? He's been walkin' out with Martha Ann Broadbent a bit since now.

MRS. H. He didn't say owt about marryin' *her*.

MARY. Oh! (*Bursts into tears.*) Well, it couldn't be about marryin' me, I'm thinkin'.

MRS. H. Now, Mary love, it were just that that he

was talkin' about. He's fair soft about yer, I can see, and he comed in to ask me whether there were any chance for him.

MARY. (*Drying her tears.*) What did you tell 'im, mother ?

MRS. H. Nay, we were fair moidered, your dad and I. We didn't know, till he told us, anything but what you were still walkin' with him.

MARY. But what did 'e say, mother ? Tell us what he said.

MRS. H. Nay, I misremember that. But he let on that he wanted you. He wanted to know if we thought it would do any good if he made up to you again.

MARY. Did he tell who I was going with ?

MRS. H. He wouldn't tell, and he wouldn't tell who he's been going with either. He'd say nothing but that he hadn't any use for her and only wanted you.

MARY. (*Crying again a little.*) It's too late, it's too late !

MRS. H. I'm not so sure about that, Mary.

MARY. He'll never 'ave me now, that's in trouble by another chap.

MRS. H. And are you so sure as it isn't Jim's, then ? Nay, it's no good you tellin' me, I'm an owd married woman, I am, and a young girl like you's easy mistaken. And, anyway, Jim's that good I believe 'e'd wed you, choose how. And you've no need talkin' anything about Thomas Thornton ; he knew you were going out with him and he knew Thomas Thornton and all.

MARY. He'd never marry me when 'e knew ; 'e'd never 'ave owt to do wi' me if 'e knew. And I dursen't deceive 'im. He gets right mad when he finds out.

It were something 'e thought I'd ought to 'ave told 'im that got 'im so mad before. And that was nothing to this.

MRS. H. Well, you can tell 'im when you're wed if yer so foolish—but what call you've to tell 'im I can't think. It's foolishness I call it. 'Ow can a young girl like you be so sure ?

MARY. Oh, mother, I love 'im that much that I want to tell 'im everything. I couldn't bear to keep 'im in ignorance.

(*Enter* MR. HAY.)

MRS. H. There now, father, ye've just come at t'right time. I'm tellin' Mary that she'd ought to make it up wi' Jim now. There's Jim wantin' to marry her that bad and she bein' just stupid and all.

MR. H. And what about this other chap that she's walkin' out wi', then, that Jim told thee about ?

MARY. He's gone . . .

MR. H. Gone ? Gone where ?

MRS. H. Now don't you bother your father, Mary. She means he's left t'village, dad.

MARY. I'd be glad and willin' to marry Jim, but there's something I want to tell 'im that would make 'im unwillin' to my thinkin' and mother says I shouldn't tell 'im till we're wed.

MRS. H. Now you're not to bother your father, Mary. I won't have it. And I think, as her mother, that she's ought to marry Jim, and not bring disgrace on us just on account of a silly quarrel.

MR. H. What are you talking about ? What disgrace ?

MRS. H. Why, she's in the family way, is the lass, and should be married.

MR. H. Well—I'm capped! Little Mary is? Why, lass, don't you bother about disgrace. There's no shame in being a mother. And I'll not think shame to be grandfather of your little 'un. He'll be useful about the farm and all.

MRS. H. Nay, father, you shouldn't talk like that. You should tell her to get wed.

MR. H. And so I do; if she fancies the man she'd best wed him. And Jim's a good lad and all.

MARY. Well, but, father. . . .

(*Enter* JIM.)

JIM. Good evening, all.

MR. H. Good evening, lad, good evening. We was just talkin' about you.

MARY. (*Getting up with her head in the air.*) Aye, talk of the devil and he's sure to appear. (*She goes out.*)

MR. H. So ye've not made up your fratchin' yet, lad?

JIM. (*Shaking his head sorrowfully.*) Nay, that's first word she's spoken to me this seven weeks now.

MRS. H. Now, Jim, you just listen to me. What you wants to do is to go and put banns up and then come back and take hold of her tight and tell her what you've done before she gets away from you.

MR. H. Now, mother. I'll not have her constrained like. If she's a mind to him she'll have him, and if she hasn't she's not to be forced.

MRS. H. There's never been a child born out of wedlock in my family, Mr. Hay, and there's not going to be one from Mary. Is there, Jim?

JIM. Is it that way with her, missus?

MR. H. Aye, so they tell me. Well, I must get on wi' t'job. I only came in for t'can. And see 'ere,

Jim—fairations now. I'll not have Mary bothered into marrying you or anybody else. (*Exit.*)

MRS. H. Eh, I'd no idea my old man was so wicked. He seems to think naught of scandalising the village with a child born out of wedlock. But *I* won't have it, Jim, and you've got to wed her at once.

JIM. I'm willing enough, missus. And pleased and all that we're going to 'ave a babby to mak' t'place seem homesome like.

MRS. H. Huh—you'll maybe not be so pleased when you have it to hold while she warms its bottle. But you're not going to back out of it, I won't let yer. Ye'll have to wed her now. And you will and all, won't yer, Jim, lad ? You'd not let 'er scandalise us ?

JIM. I'm willing enough, I tell you, but will she ?

MRS. H. You'll maybe have to humble yourself a bit, lad.

JIM. If that's all, it's nowt. I've done it this twice already, coming here asking her mother's help to her. And I expect I'll have to do it many a time and oft if we wed. They tell me that if a chap doesn't make out to be in the wrong his wife'll never stop the fratchin', because she's that sure that either chap's wrong or if he's right then she's that bad she isn't fit to be spoke to.

MRS. H. Get away wi' yer. A woman wants a bit of pleasuring now and again, and a quarrel with her old man's a bit of a change. It's like being a person out of a book instead of yourself for a bit.

(*Enter* MARY.)

MARY. What, here yet, Jim ? Are you courtin' mother ? Dad's well enough, ain't he, mother ? Ye'll have to wait a bit for his shoes, I reckon, Jim.

MRS. H. Now, Mary, 'ave a bit of sense, lass, and don't go rantin' at Jim.

MARY. Well, mother, I reckon it must be you that he's come after. He's naught to say to me I notice.

JIM. I've a deal to say to you, Mary, if you'll nobbut listen to me.

MARY. Well, and what is it, then ?

JIM. I'm right sorry I spoke to you as I did, lass. I must have been moidered with loving you so much.

MARY. It didn't sound like that !

MRS. H. Just you listen to him, Mary, now.

JIM. Mebbe it didn't sound like that, but if you loved like I do ye'd know that such a deal of love makes you kind of so wrought up that you're very easy upset.

MARY. Who says I didn't love you as much as you loved me ?

MRS. H. That's easy seen, Mary. Here he is on his bended knees to you and you giving him back-answers.

MARY. And what about Martha Ann Broadbent, then ?

JIM. I didn't go walking with her but that one Sunday afternoon, Mary, and ye were walking with Thomas Thornton six weeks. Did ye love Thomas Thornton, Mary ?

MARY. (*Breaking down.*) I never loved but you, Jim, and if you can love me still I'll wed you and thankful, for I don't know what I'd do without you.

(JIM *gets up and goes across the room to her.* MRS. HAY *slips out of the door.* JIM *sits down beside* MARY *and takes her head on his shoulder.*)

JIM. I think we've been a pair of fools, Mary. I've been loving you every day of all this seven weeks,

and first part of the time I were that mad that I was swearing I'd have naught to do with you, and then I got that miserable I didn't know what I could do without you.

MARY. That's how it was with me, Jim. It was only when I was with Tom that I could feel as though there wasn't a piece of me lost. And when I was with him I felt a different girl altogether and I'd feel I didn't care about anything at all. I felt just dare-devil.

JIM. And when I walked with Martha Ann and she put her arm through mine it just minded me of Mary, and I turned back from the walk, and I said good-afternoon to her at her door and went home and blubbered on my bed.

MARY. Oh, Jim! I *have* been a bad lass.

JIM. Nay, I was as bad as you.

MARY. Well—I will say you were t'first to get mad.

JIM. But tha knaws, lass, it were right disheartenin' to be laughed at in the very middle of a loving kiss.

MARY. I should do it again, Jim. I couldn't 'elp it. It tickled summat awful.

JIM. I didn't like that lesson that you and Tom gave me, lass.

MARY. I didn't care so much for it myself, to tell you t'truth, Jim. It tickled a bit and all.

JIM. Did it now? Well, I'm a bit capped at that, and 'im so experienced.

MARY. Aye—'e talked a deal about 'is experience of kisses. And you weren't so long in payin' me out. Did ye tek oop wi' t'first lass that came along? 'Ow you could ever come to walk with Martha Ann I *can't* think.

JIM. I met 'er just round t'corner.

MARY. And fetched 'er along to spite me, I s'pose ?

JIM. Aye—just so. I owed ye one for that kiss yer showed me.

MARY. It 'ud 'a paid you better not to 'ave done it. It wer a mean trick and yer should be 'shamed of it.

JIM. And wot if I am, lass ?

MARY. Well, then, I'm 'shamed of that kiss, then.

JIM. When shall we be wed, Mary ?

MARY. When you like, Jim—soon.

JIM. Shall I put t'banns up right off ?

MARY. If you like, Jim. But, Jim, there's something I want to tell you.

(*Enter* MRS. HAY *in a flutter.*)

MRS. H. Now then, Jim, off with yer. Mary and I must get the master's tea for him, and you best be off to tell t'parson to call you on Sunday—that's to-morrow. Mr. Hay'll be right pleased 'at ye've made up to be wed, Jim.

JIM. He'll noan be so pleased as what I am, mother-i'-law. I'm off to t'parson now.

MARY. But, Jim——

MRS. H. Now don't ye bother 'im, lass. He's got business to see to. See yer to-morrow, Jim.

JIM. Well—good-night, both.

(*Exit.*)

MRS. H. Now, Mary, I'm fair ashamed of you, going for to spoil all by telling him that stuff about it being Tom's child *now*. You're to hold your tongue, then, till I tell you.

MARY. Nay, mother, truth 'ad best come out now and done with. Can't you see 'at I love him and don't want to go deceiving him ?

MRS. H. Now, Mary, you're old enough to be well

aware that sometimes a woman must deceive her man for 'is own good. It'll be a poor day for the men when the women give in to all the foolishness men's made up for theirselves about honesty and truth and that. If your dad's selling a standing crop and t'other chap hasn't sense to go through it and see for himself, do you think your dad would tell him that there was disease in t'middle? It's every man for himself in business—they tell me that's law and all—and it's every woman for herself when it comes to marryin'. That's 'er business.

MARY. But, mother, I should feel a deal happier in my mind if I'd told him, and perhaps he'd marry me anyways.

MRS. H. Yer never can tell what a man'll do when there's another man in t'case. If there's another woman in his case, now, he'll do t'same thing every time. He'll let on to himself that it's nobbut a case of wild oats and he'll say his wife's a deal too pure and white to be told about it.

MARY. But he's bound to know sometime, mother. The babby might be like Tom, you know.

MRS. H. Well, and what then? Ye'd be married by then and he couldn't do owt but perhaps give you a bit of a hidin'. He might do that.

MARY. I shouldn't mind that so much, but he might feel sorely used by me. He might stop loving me, and I love him. I'm fixed in my mind to tell him before we're wed.

MRS. H. And what if you're not wed, then? Suppose that he says he won't keep another's brat—if it is another's, as I doubt. What are you going to do then?

MARY. I don't know.

MRS. H. I should think not. Do you think I want a crying babe about the house again when I've brought you all up and finished with it, and me with all the work to do while you're laid up ?

MARY. Oh, mother, I bring naught but sorrow on you. Don't you hate me ? But I must tell him. I can't deceive him. Mother, help me to bear it if he won't have me.

(*She gets up and throws her arms out to her mother, who clasps her and comforts her.*)

MRS. H. There, there, my lamb ! Your mother was a wicked old woman to talk that way to you. But I'm sorry you're going to tell him, all the same, for I'm feared 'e'll not go through with it.

(*Curtain.*)

ACT IV.

SCENE AS IN ACT III.

MRS. H. Well, I call it right nice of you to have come round, Ellen, a day like this and all.

MRS. WHITTLE. Well, I only 'eard this mornin'—eh, you will be pleased, but my word, you'll miss 'er.

MRS. H. Aye, we shall that, but we're right glad for 'er that it's all right with 'er, yer knaw. It's a bad job being an old maid. We're right pleased about it. And there's a fine crop of hay and the cow's in calf and all. We've a lot to be thankful for. Ay, she's been a good lass, 'as Mary.

MRS. WH. She 'as that, I'm sure. And where is she now ? She'll not be out with 'im this weather ?

MRS. H. Nay, she's laid down upstairs. Not that

she's any call to by rights. But yer knaw what men are, and I thought if Jim saw 'at she got made a bit of a fuss of at 'ome on account of 'er state he'd 'appen not put on 'er.

MRS. WH. Yer quite right, Annie—a young 'usband wants teachin' to be careful when his wife's that way. And when are they goin' to be wed d'you say?

MRS. H. They was called first time this morning, so it'll be last Saturday a month.

MRS. WH. Well, to think of Mary going to be a mother and be married and all. Eh, and I remember her in short frocks. I buried both mine, as you know. And grand funerals they 'ad and all. But it's a poor consolation for a mother is a grand funeral, whatever it may be for the neighbours.

MRS. H. And we mean to 'ave a grand weddin', I can tell you, Ellen. Mary's to 'ave a white silk gown, yer know, and a veil.

MRS. WH. And I think a grand weddin's a deal more interestin' than any funeral, 'owever grand; tho' most folk don't hold with that notion. They're merrier like. I like to see a shy bride myself. I think it's right nice to see a lass that's been that confident as lasses are nowadays not knowin' where to look for shyness.

MRS. H. Well, you know, they can't 'elp but be a bit scared, bein' the centre of such an affair.

MRS. WH. I've wondered a time or two if there was anything between your Mary and that Thomas Thornton. You'll not mind me saying so, dear, me being such an old friend.

MRS. H. Thomas Thornton! Whatever made you think a thing like that, Ellen? Our Mary!

MRS. WH. Well, you know, they did say they were

seen together a two-three times. But some folks 'as queer thoughts, and myself I like that motto that the King 'as under his picture—summat in Latin about the wish is father to the thought, I believe it means.

MRS. H. I always says that folks that's for ever smelling out something nasty should take something for the stinking breath under their own noses.

MRS. WH. And then, you know, Mary fainting when I telled about his accident made me wonder a bit.

MRS. H. Nay, that was naught wasn't that, in *her* state. I 'ope you 'aven't said anything about that to any of the folk ?

MRS. WH. Well, I did mention it to one or two in confidence like. But I shall tell 'em it was naught to do with Thomas that caused 'er to give way all of a sudden like that when she 'eard 'e was dead.

MRS. H. Well, I never 'eard of such a thing ! Why, all the village knows that Jim's been courtin' 'er this past two years.

MRS. WH. Well, all the village knows that they quarrelled a few weeks sin' and all.

MRS. H. And now they know that they're to be wed last Saturday a month, then, and 'appen that'll satisfy them.

MRS. WH. And that you know it won't. Was there ever in this village anything that stopped talk, except something else to talk about ?

(*Enter* MR. HAY.)

MRS. HAY. Eh, there's parson passin' t'winder.

(*Knock at the door.*)

That'll be 'im at t'door. What'll he want, think you ?

(MRS. HAY *gets up and goes to door. Enter* REV. WILLIAMS.)

WILLIAMS. How d'you do, Mrs. Hay? What dreadful weather, isn't it? How d'you do, Mr. Hay? How's this rain suit you? Well, Mrs. Whittle, have you braved the weather, too?

MRS. WH. Aye, I just stepped round out of friendly feeling, you know, Mr. Williams. Times like these, you know, folks like to know 'at their neighbours is friendly.

WILLIAMS. That's very kind of you, Mrs. Whittle. I am sure Mr. and Mrs. Hay need all the sympathy they can get just now. I've come for the same reason.

MRS. H. Well, it's very kind of you I'm sure, Mr. Williams.

WILLIAMS. I hope Mary is in a proper frame of mind. Sometimes girls are apt to be a little obstinate and unrepentant at first. I should be glad to speak to her for you if you like.

(HAY'S *face shows a slight smile.*)

HAY. I thought, mebbe, yer didn't mean just what t'wife thought yer meant, Mr. Williams.

WILLIAMS. How's that? What do you mean? I'm afraid I do not quite follow.

HAY. Well, you see, t'wife thought 'appen you'd come round to congratulate us.

WILLIAMS. What?

MRS. H. Eh, deary me, deary me! Surely t'man 'asn't come to scold her for summat.

WILLIAMS. But, Mrs. Hay, surely you don't support her. If I had known this morning that she was with child I should have hesitated about putting up the banns before she had expressed penitence.

MRS. H. But what's t'lass done amiss? He's bound to wed 'er and child'll be born i' wedlock.

WILLIAMS. The sin is not in her being with child, Mrs. Hay, it is giving herself to a man before marriage.

MRS. H. Eh, bless the man, does he think we're stocks and stones, like the hideous goblins on the church roof ?

MRS. WH. Nay, Mr. Williams, she's a good lass and there's nought wrong wi' 'er.

WILLIAMS. I am surprised and much disappointed that you are not horrified at this disaster that has come upon your family. I hope this laxness of view is not common in the village.

HAY. It's a pity you should be so grieved, Mr. Williams. It's on'y nature, tha knaws, and it's to be allowed for.

WILLIAMS. The Church allows for nature, Mr. Hay—she offers the sacrament of marriage.

HAY. Aye, but you can't undo a marriage, mister, and a chap wants to know that he isn't tied up to a barren wife.

WILLIAMS. Children are the gift of God, and if it is His will a marriage bears fruit.

HAY. That's all very well, but a chap doesn't want to buy a pig in a poke, tha knaws. And it's just as well to find out what God's will is going to be. Why, even t'churches put up t'weather cocks to see which way t'wind's blowin'.

WILLIAMS. But surely you see that it is wrong to mate without the blessing of God, or even the sanction of the state.

HAY. Aye, Ah've heard yer say so i' t'pulpit, not from t'place where yer read t'Bible. And there's one of your bishops that's always talking about folk having lots of children in their marriages, and surely he

wouldn't think it wrong of a chap to make sure 'at he can get what's right ?

WILLIAMS. Mr. Hay, children are God's gift, and shouldn't be begotten without His blessing. The Church offers prayers at the marriage service that the marriage may be fruitful, and that is all man has any right to do.

HAY. You mean 'at a man can offer prayers for what he can make sure of getting if he goes about it t'right way ? Well, Ah've allus thowt 'at t'owd motto "God helps them that help themselves" has a deal of sense in it.

WILLIAMS. That is not in the Bible, Mr. Hay, and it is not true religion.

HAY. 'Appen it's older than t'Bible, then, Mr. Williams. At ony rate, it seems to me 'at if a chap wants children it was as likely to be God as the devil 'at taught him how to make sure o' getting them.

WILLIAMS. Can I speak to Mary, Mrs. Hay ?

MRS. H. Of course you can. (*Goes to inner door.*) Mary, here's Mr. Williams come to see you.

MARY. All right, mother, I'll be down directly.

MRS. H. Now, Mr. Williams, I'll ask yer not to mek 'er miserable. She's right happy, is the lass, and it doesn't do to go being miserable when you're in her state.

WILLIAMS. I promise you I'll be very gentle with her, Mrs. Hay.

(*Enter* MARY.)

Good afternoon, Mary.

MARY. Good afternoon, sir.

WILLIAMS. I was very glad to call your banns this morning.

MARY. Thank you, sir.

WILLIAMS. But I'm very sorry indeed to hear you have not thought fit to wait for God's blessing on your union.

MARY. No, sir. At least, I mean I think He has done, sir, as you seem to know.

WILLIAMS. You mean that you are going to have a child and that shows God has blessed your union? My dear, God sendeth rain upon the just and upon the unjust.

MARY. Then it seems to be all the same, sir. I don't want to be made unhappy. I'm going to have a baby, and I'm very happy, and I'm very fond of Jim.

(*Enter* JIM.)

JIM. Oh, is that Mr. Williams? If you please, old Tom 'All's took bad and wants yer, sir.

WILLIAMS. Ah, I must go at once. I should like to talk to you again, Mary. Good afternoon, all of you.

(*Exit.*)

JIM. (*Nodding his head towards the door.*) Wot's oop?

HAY. Nay, it's same owd tale. He says 'at yer shouldn't 'a looked before yer lepped, lad. Tha shouldn't 'ave made sure of childer before tha axed a blessing. 'Ave a bit of bacca, lad? (*Hands pouch.*)

JIM. I don't mind if I do. (*A pause while* JIM *lights his pipe.*) So that's t'bother, is it?

MRS. WH. Well, well, and I must be goin'. You'll excuse me, I'm sure. Good afternoon, all.

ALL. Good afternoon.

MRS. H. I'll just see yer out o' t'door. My word,

but it does rain! And I'm thankful to yer for callin'. Good day.

(*Exit* MRS. WHITTLE.)

MRS. H. Now then, it'll be all round t'village in no time that parson's been here to scold our Mary. A meddlesome, gossiping woman, she is.

MR. H. She's a right friend of yours tho', isn't she, missus?

MRS. H. Right friend, indeed, that goes tale-bearing round t'village about Mary faintin' and that. She's always the best friend anybody 'as when there's owt going off for her to talk about.

MR. H. Well, speech is one o' the things that shows we're a bit more than animals. But I'm not so sure that it's a distinction to be proud of. I fancy if our old cow could talk we should have less milk. She's a right gossiping look about 'er.

MARY. (*Firmly.*) It's a good job she's gone, anyway. I've summat to tell yer, Jim. It isn't yours.

MRS. H. Mary!

HAY. What?

JIM. (*Stupidly.*) I think yer might 'a telled me afore we was called in church, Mary. (*Pause.*) It looks ser bad.

MRS. H. Wot looks ser bad, Jim? Yer not going to give 'er oop, are ye?

JIM. Well, it looks bad me not knowin' before we was called. Looks deceitful of 'er like.

MRS. H. Why, Jim, 'course it can't be deceitful. Why, she need never 'a telled you at all. Ye'd 'a never known. I'm surprised at ye being so foolish, Mary. Wot did yer want to go upsettin' us all like this for?

Ye'd 'a gone on as happy as dead birds if ye'd never said owt and held yer tongue.

HAY. Nay, mother, she did right to tell. 'Oo was it, Mary ?

JIM. Aye, 'appen ye'd best tell us that.

MARY. It'll do no good.

JIM. I expect it's Tom's, isn't it ?

HAY. Who's Tom ? (*Angrily.*) Is it Thomas Thornton ?

MARY. Well, and what if it is ?

HAY. He was a bad 'un ! My word, lass, it's well for thee I never catched yer wi' 'un. I'd 'ave taken stick to t'pair on yer.

MARY. He wasn't a bad 'un. He was a grand lad if 'is dad 'adn't tried to mek 'im a farmer.

JIM. 'Appen you're right, Mary. Anyway, it doesn't seem to mek much differ whether he was a bad 'un or a good 'un, now. Yon child's 'is, and there's no gettin' away from that. (*Pause.*) Ah cud like to 'ave two-three words wi' Mary, measter. Ah think we'll go up to 'er room.

HAY. Nay, ye'll do nowt o' t'sort. Missus and I'll just step into Pickles' for a bit of a chat.

MRS. H. Aye, I'll get my 'at, father.

HAY. Nay, 'at be damned ! It's nobbut two steps out of our door into theirs. Come on. 'Ow long will yer be ? We're fain to knaw wot yer barn to do.

JIM. 'Appen five minutes, measter.

HAY. Well, well !

(*Exeunt* HAY *and* MRS. HAY.)

JIM. Mary, come and sit ower against me.

MARY. I'll not, Jim.

JIM. For why ?

MARY. I'll not 'ave thee saying 'at after 'at I coaxed thee.

JIM. That's foolishness, lass. Ah 'aven't axed thee to wed ma ter talk like a man, but because tha can coax me with thy prettiness and thy softness.

MARY. Ah'm noan ter wed becos Ah'm soft, Jim.

JIM. Ah s'pose so. Folks allus want ter be wed for wot ther not, though Ah'm not sayin' 'at yer not a clever lass and one as a man'll not weary of 'avin' about t'ouse when there's noa time fer kissin'. But come tha 'ere, Mary. Oh, Aw want ter knaw 'at ye'll not feel no different i' my arms.

MARY. Ah'd liever talk to thee first, Jim. Tell me what differ it makes 'at I bin wi' another chap. Is it t'child 'at's comin' ?

JIM. No, it's not, Mary.

MARY. Ah sud think not. Yer were glad enough w'en yer thowt it were your own. An' it's not an extry one to feed, for tha knows if it 'ad been thine it 'ad been to feed. Is it 'at Ah've been wi' another chap ?

JIM. Ah can't say 'at it's that, Mary.

MARY. An' w'y sud it be ? If I'd bin wed to 'im and tha were thinkin' of marryin' ye'd 'a come to me tho' I wor a widder. And 'e's dead an' all. Is it 'at I didn't tell yer ?

JIM. Nay, it's noan that, lass, tho' I'd a bin better pleased if ye'd 'a telled me a bit sooner.

MARY. Well, wot is it, then ?

JIM. If tha'll come 'ere I'll tell thee.

(*She goes over and sits by him.*)

MARY. Well ?

(*He puts his arm round her and kisses her hard on the mouth.*)

JIM. It's that, Mary. I were just fain to show thee my love, choose 'ow.

MARY. What does t'a mean ? Are ye barn to wed me ? (JIM *kisses her again.*) What did yer send dad and mother out for, then ?

(JIM *kisses her again.*)

JIM. Mary, my dear, I was just fain to kiss tha, and there's kissin' ye can 'ave w'en there's other folk there, and there's kisses ye can 'ave w'en yer by yer lones. And it's wet outside and I wanted to kiss thee in 'ere, so I just let on 'at I wanted to talk to thee.

MARY. Jim ! Can you forgive me, then ?

JIM. Love isn't destroyed by owt, Mary.

MARY. What about the bother over your moustache, then ?

JIM. Nay, that's naught but a sort of molehill lovers trip over, because lovers' eyes aren't looking on the ground.

(*They kiss.*)

MARY. Jim, you mind about the chap that kissed me that didn't tickle ?

JIM. Now, Mary, that's done with.

MARY. I only wanted to tell you who it was.

JIM. Well, now then ?

MARY. Oh, Jim, it was only father !

(*Curtain.*)

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